



Patricia Larenas
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I provide input and science oversight for the development of a cell culture system destined for the International Space Station. Much of my activities center around reporting project progress, acting as a liaison on diverse issues, writing test plans, and insuring that NASA gets a quality product. In addition, I provide oversight of our labs at NASA Ames where I direct the testing done in-house. All of this work is done as part of a team, and the team takes part in all of the decision making.

Areas of expertise:

- Cell Biology
- Space Life-Science Hardware Development

How I first became interested in this profession:

I have been interested in living things and Space since childhood. I was always bringing "critters" home, much to my mother's distress! The study of Earth and the universe will always provide surprises and fascination for me.

What helped prepare me for this job:

My time spent in a research environment, and my ability to write and communicate clearly with others.

My role models or inspirations:

My family is inspiring; my parents immigrated from Chile when my brother and I were very young. All four children have done well in our careers and we all give back to the community through volunteer work or other involvement. Our professions include: a nurse, a bi-lingual teacher, a biochemist and a cell biologist. I credit our success to our dedicated parents and our cultural heritage.

My education and training:

- AS (Associate of Science) Animal Health Technology, Foothill College
- BA, San Jose State University
- MPA (Master of Public Administration), San Jose State University, currently in progress
- Additional advanced training in Immunology, U.C. Berkeley Extension..

My career path:

- Veterinary medicine for 2 years
- 3 years in biotechnology researching monoclonal antibodies and immunology.
- 12 years I worked on human immunology research projects at a research institute in Palo Alto, CA.
- Fall of 2000-present, NASA Ames to participate in gravitational biology and space sciences.

What I like about my job:

I feel privileged to be a part of the space program and to contribute to space life sciences research. I also enjoy working as part of a team on a challenging project.

What I don't like about my job:

Sometimes the paperwork side of it can be overwhelming.

My advice to anyone interested in this occupation:

Get as much education as possible, hopefully at the graduate level. During your college years seek out internships at NASA centers (the Astrobiology Academy, too). Follow your heart, your passion, and things that interest you to pursue for a career.